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S E R M O N

ON THE

HAPPY RECOVERY

OF

HIS MAJESTY

KING GEORGE THE THIRD.

PREACHED AT

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S E R M O N, &c.

DEUT. xxxii. 39.

I WOUND, AND I HEAL.

THE happy event which we are now assembled to commemorate, has diffused a general joy through the land, has been the occasion of mutual congratulation among his Majesty's subjects, and is abundant also by many thanksgivings to God.

THE words of our text have been strikingly exemplified, by the late dispensations of Divine Providence, in the affliction and recovery of our beloved Sovereign. "I wound, and I heal."

THIS is the language of the great God, asserting the supreme dignity of his cha-

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rafter, and the sovereignty of his dominion, as motives to enforce obedience to his laws. The folly of idolatrous worship is pointedly exposed in the preceding verses. "Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-offerings? Let them rise up and help you," now your "power is gone;" "let them be your protection," in the "day of your calamity."—Then the text is introduced contrasting the character of Jehovah, God of Israel, with those imaginary deities. "See now, that I, even I am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I WOUND, AND I HEAL: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand."

WITHOUT entering more particularly into the connexion of these words, we will proceed,

I. To

I. To make some general remarks respecting the providence of God.

II. To attempt an improvement of the subject.

I. WE are to make some general remarks respecting the providence of God.
“ I wound, and I heal.”

THESE words might be considered as descriptive of the conduct of God as the God of grace, who first wounds the conscience with a sense of guilt, and then relieves it by the discovery of mercy: but the connexion in which the text stands, and the occasion on which we are now assembled, lead our attention more particularly to the doctrine of divine providence.

THE doctrine of divine providence is infinitely important, as it is the foundation of all religion, natural and revealed; and the ground of our most substantial comforts. If there were no providence, the course of events would be viewed with pain, and the

whole world contemplated with disgust.---
It is the doctrine of providence which irradiates the darkest shades of adversity, and adds new lustre to the brightest scenes of life.

AND, blessed be God, this interesting truth, that the world is governed by divine providence, is abundantly evident. It is discovered by the light of reason; it was acknowledged by the heathens; and it is confirmed by facts. The being, the perfections, and the character of God as the former of the universe; and the beauty, order, and regularity every where preserved, lead us to conclude, that things do not fluctuate fortuitously; but are under the constant direction, influence, and government of their great Parent, who is infinitely wise, powerful, and good. It is no ways inconsistent with the eminence of his perfections to watch over the work of his own hands;---nor is the tranquillity of his mind the least disturbed by superintending the almost infinite variety of events which
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come to pass ;—and with such consummate wisdom is divine providence adjusted, as not to supersede the general laws of nature, the liberty of moral agents, or the mutual dependence of mankind.

THE Holy Scriptures, given by divine inspiration, clearly and fully teach us, that the world is under the government of God. Here we have the most elevated descriptions of the Supreme Being, as sitting at the helm of universal nature ; directing all its affairs ; influencing all events ; working all things according to his original plan, after the counsel of his own will ; and over-ruling all circumstances to the praise of his glory. The Scriptures constantly lead our meditation from second causes to the First Grand Cause. “ I wound, and I heal.” “ Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” And as the
 blessings

blessings of life are dispensed by his providence, so are the evils which befall us. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" By evil we are to understand, not moral evil, or sin, which is necessarily the object of the divine detestation; but natural evil, or affliction. Thus God himself teacheth us that afflictions come from him, Isaiah xlv. 7. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil," or bring affliction upon men, upon individuals, families and nations: "I the LORD do all these things." Again, Amos iii. 6. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?"

As all events are under his direction, so all persons are the subjects of his government. In this respect, there is no difference between the Prince upon the throne, and the Peasant in the cottage. He, who governs among the nations, is KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

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The hearts of kings are in his hands, and as rivers of water he turneth them whithersoever he will. To make his power known, he leaves a PHARAOH to the hardness of his heart. To punish the insolence of a SENNACHERIB, he puts his hook in his nose (to use the language of the prophet Isaiah), and his bridle in his lips, and turns him back by the way by which he came to invade Jerusalem. And, to redeem his people from captivity in Babylon, he raises up a CYRUS to execute his pleasure. Many other instances recorded in Scripture might be pointed out; but those which have been mentioned will suffice.—That kings are the subjects of God's government, and absolutely dependant upon him, we have been lately taught by the awful calamity with which HIS MAJESTY has been afflicted. In this visitation of Divine Providence we have seen and acknowledged HIM who is higher than the princes of
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the earth, whose kingdom ruleth over all, and who doth whatsoever pleaseth him in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou ? Before him all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance : behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. He bringeth the princes to nothing ; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.—Nor is the divine government confined to this world : the universe is his empire, worlds upon worlds are his dominion.

THE events which have recently taken place, may lead us to remark the sudden vicissitudes of providence. Soon after the nation celebrated, with all the warmth of gratitude and exultation of joy, the
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secular anniversary of the Revolution; we were called to hang our harps upon the willows, and to sit down and weep, on account of the affliction of our gracious Sovereign.—But though sorrow may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning. This we have experienced. The remarkable recovery of our good King has restored joy to the nation, and excited a general spirit of thankfulness to that God, who hath turned our mourning into dancing, and put off our sackcloth, and clothed us with gladness. He hath put a new song in our mouths, even praise unto our God.

LET us next remark the mysteriousness of the divine conduct. His paths are in the sea, his ways are in the great deep, and his footsteps are not known. He dwelleth in the secret place of thunder. He maketh darkness his pavilion. He hideth the face of his throne, and covereth it with a dark, thick cloud; through which we cannot penetrate. Clouds and

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darkness are round about his throne. The dispensations of his providence are often past finding out ; and, who can pretend to say what was the particular design of the infinitely wise God in the affliction with which we have been lately exercised ? No doubt it forcibly inculcates many important lessons ; such as, that the most exalted are dependant upon God ; that in some respects kings are upon a level with their subjects ; and that unlimited confidence ought not to be placed in the best of princes. But these are general truths : still we know not the particular ends which God had in view in visiting the King, and his people, with so great an affliction. God is a Sovereign, and does not always condescend to teach us the reasons of his conduct. But, it is pleasing to reflect, that all his dispensations are holy, wise, and good ; that they are all intimately connected ; and together form one beautiful, regular, and harmonious whole.

whole. This we shall see in a more perfect state ; and, in the mean time, we are to walk by faith ; satisfied, upon the authority of God, that all things work together for good to them that love him ; and rejoicing in hope, that what we know not now we shall know hereafter.

HAVING made these brief remarks upon the providence of God, let us now,

II. ATTEMPT an improvement of the subject ; “ I wound, and I heal.”

1. LET us learn the submission which is due to the providence of God in the day of adversity.

THE Governor of the World has been lately saying to us, “ Be still, and KNOW THAT I AM GOD—I will be exalted in the earth.” Was our King wounded ? It was God who did it. “ I wound.” No affliction cometh forth out of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the

ground : but God, in chastising us, performeth the thing that is appointed for us. With what submission does it become us to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, when he uses the rod of affliction ! He is Sovereign, and he will do all his pleasure. He is supreme, and he ought to govern. He is infinitely perfect, and can never do wrong. But, because he is infinite, and we see only part of his ways, it is reasonable to expect that his dispensations, though always holy, wise, and good, should sometimes appear so dark as greatly to distress the mind. But, at such times, we ought not to murmur ; we ought not to censure Providence ; we ought not to suspect the wisdom, the equity, or the kindness of his conduct. Who is there among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.

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IN the day of adversity, consider, that you are but of yesterday, and know comparatively nothing; that you can see but a little way into the leadings and designs of providence; and that, for aught you know, those very things which you think are against you, are working for your good.—May such reflections calm the tumult of your mind, hush every contending passion, render you submissive to the will of God, and lead you to justify his ways to men!—Say with Samuel, “It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.”—With Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”—With David, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.”—With Habakkuk, “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the
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the God of my salvation." In a word, say with your Divine Master, "Not my will, but thine be done."

You are not, however, to affect a stoical insensibility, or to neglect proper means of relief. This would be to despise the chastening of the Lord; which is highly sinful, With the most dutiful submission to the will of God, we should use every prudent mean, and pray for a divine blessing to attend it.

THANKS be to God there is no occasion at present to dwell long upon this part of our subject, as we are now called not to mourn but to rejoice. We observe, therefore,

2. THE gratitude which is due to Divine Providence for the blessings we enjoy.

DOES God wound? And are we to be resigned? He heals, and we should give him praise. What abundant cause have we

we for thankfulness, as individuals, as a church, and as a nation !

GRATITUDE is a debt which is justly due to the Divine Goodness. It is our most reasonable service. Gratitude to God, as the preserver and deliverer of men, is a duty which reason teaches. The Pagans thought themselves obliged to make acknowledgments to their deities for the favors which they considered as coming from their hands. The common support of animal existence, and recovery from dangerous disorders, they acknowledged to proceed from the bounty of their gods. And shall not we adore the true GOD for his great goodness to us ? As our ideas are more just, our gratitude should be more fervent.

GRATITUDE is a very important duty ; for, when properly discharged, it is accompanied with unaffected humility, fervent love to God, steady confidence in his goodness,

ness, ardent zeal for his glory, and sincere obedience to his laws.

GRATITUDE is a delightful duty. The exercise of gratitude is highly pleasing. A devout heart is most happy when celebrating the divine love. This was the employ of man in Paradise; and this will be the exercise of glorified saints, and angels, in Heaven, to all eternity.

OF all nations upon earth, we have the most abundant reason to be thankful. The country in which it is our happiness to live, is highly favored by the God of nature; it is wonderfully distinguished by the God of providence; and is under the highest obligations to the God of grace. To say nothing of our natural advantages, if we consider the conduct of God as the God of providence and grace, who can help exclaiming, What hath God wrought!—How early was the nation delivered from Pagan idolatry, by the preaching of the gospel! And when popish darkness, superstition,

flition, and idolatry covered the land; how did God make the wrath of man to praise him, by opening a way for the Reformation! How remarkable was the defeat of the Spanish Armada! How timely the detection of that black, that shocking, that infernal scheme the Gunpowder Plot! How wonderful the deliverance from popery and arbitrary power, by the REVOLUTION under KING WILLIAM THE THIRD! a name that will for ever shine, with the brightest lustre, in the records of history. How, amidst various conspiracies formed against his royal person, was his important life preserved, to complete the Act of Settlement of the British Crown on the ILLUSTRIOUS HOUSE OF HANOVER! How seasonable was the death of Queen ANNE, to prevent the iniquitous operation of the Schism-Bill! How happily was the Rebellion suppressed in the reign of GEORGE the First! And, in the reign of GEORGE the Second, how successfully were

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the Rebels subdued by the victorious arms of the renowned DUKE OF CUMBERLAND! How conspicuous was the hand of Providence in preserving our present gracious SOVEREIGN from the attack which was made on his royal person! And how are our obligations to the Divine Goodness accumulated, by the recent RECOVERY OF HIS MAJESTY from a severe and dangerous disorder!

BLESS the LORD, O our souls, and all that is within us, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits! Not unto us, O LORD! not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise! The LORD hath indeed done great things for us, whereof we are glad. He hath healed the diseases of our beloved King; and we will gratefully adore his goodness. When the LORD addresses us in the words of our text, "I heal," our hearts reply, "Unto thee, O God! do we give thanks; unto thee do we give thanks."

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And where is the Dissenter, where is the Protestant, where is the Briton, that has any sense of religion operating on his conscience, who does not affectionately adopt this grateful language !

WE are thankful that God hath given efficacy to medicine, and restored a fellow man, from a heavy affliction, to the enjoyment of health and comfort. We are thankful, that an affectionate husband is restored to an affectionate and amiable consort, whose praises, I believe, are universally celebrated, and against whom the breath of calumny hath never whispered a suspicion. We are thankful, that a kind parent is restored to a numerous offspring : but especially are we thankful, that the political head of an extensive empire is restored to a loyal people.

WE are particularly thankful that the King is recovered, on account of the different sentiments which were entertained

respecting the intended Regency. We are not going to enter into the disputes of our political leaders ; such a discussion would be improper here : every one knows that the first men of the nation were divided in their opinions, that England and Ireland adopted different plans, and that the minds of some were seriously alarmed. Some were fearful, that the just balance and mutual counterpoise of power, on which the glory and existence of the British constitution depend, would be destroyed by unreasonably circumscribing the powers of the Regent. And others had apprehensions of a different nature. But, thanks be to God, every fear is removed, every cloud is dissipated, and every heart is gladdened, by the restoration of His Majesty to health and peace. However contending parties were previously disunited in their sentiments, there is no contention now, except it be, who shall shew the most affectionate loyalty, by unequivocal demonstrations of joy. The
health

health of the King is the cause of general gladness to his subjects.

ANOTHER reason why we are thankful to Almighty God, for restoring our Sovereign, is the religious character which his Majesty sustains. Kings, as well as subjects, stand in need of personal religion.— In comparison with religion, diadems are toys. Religion is the ONE THING NEEDFUL. Without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance of sin, and conversion unto God, no human being, however exalted, will ever receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. We should be thankful when we have evidence of the personal religion of kings, not that their souls are more valuable than the souls of their meanest subjects: but because we have reason to hope that they will be more extensively useful. I do not mean that they will be useful by exercising authority over the consciences of men; that is not the way to do good; that never has done good;

good ; but, on the contrary, it has done a world of evil. Nor has the most exalted earthly potentate any right to exercise dominion over conscience. To assume such authority, is to invade the prerogative of JESUS CHRIST, the great and only HEAD of the christian church.—But, as kings are lights set upon a hill, their religious EXAMPLE, being conspicuous, may prove of singular and eminent utility.

AGAIN : We are bound to give thanks to God, for restoring the King to the earnest and repeated prayers of an affectionate and loyal people ; and thus giving us another proof that God heareth and answereth prayer. Christians, of all denominations, manifested their affection for his Majesty, by their prayers on his behalf.—The Protestant Dissenters, who acknowledge no human authority in religion, and who pray without the use of forms ; when they heard the melancholy news of the King's indisposition, fervently interceded
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on his behalf in their prayers to God; and when they were assured of his happy recovery, they, without waiting for a form of thanksgiving, lifted up their hearts and voices, to the God of salvation, in devout acknowledgement of the great deliverance vouchsafed unto his servant.

In behalf of kings we are commanded to be thankful. 1 Tim. ii. 1. "I exhort, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in authority." And we feel ourselves peculiarly indebted to Divine Providence for healing our gracious Sovereign, whose mild administration has been long experienced. In ages past, though less enlightened than the present, the spirit of Britons was sometimes roused by the madness of Tyrants; and Tyrants were taught by experience that Britons would be free. As the principles of liberty were investigated, the love of freedom increased; and to
this

this love of liberty we are indebted for the GEORGES.

THE acts of our present King, in making the Judges independent, and freeing Protestant Dissenting Ministers from obligation to subscribe the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England, are additional jewels which sparkle in his crown. May it shine yet more and more unto the perfect day!

METHINKS I see new laurels to adorn his brow, Methinks I hear the trumpet of fame waxing louder and louder in sounding forth his praise. Methinks I see auspicious days approaching. Then, those ever loyal subjects, the Protestant Dissenters, no longer treated with UNMERITED DISTINCTION, by the imposition of the Sacramental Test as a qualification for admission to civil and military offices, will raise still higher notes, to swell the song in praise of George our King. And who are those, of different complexion, on yonder shore, stretching

stretching out their hands to the God of Heaven? They are NEGROES;—praying for blessings to descend on the head of our gracious Sovereign, for pitying them in their low estate, and setting captives free. With joy-expanded breasts they gratefully proclaim, LONG LIVE THE KING! GOD SAVE THE KING! And let every Dissenter, let every Protestant, let every Briton, say, AMEN and AMEN.

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...the hands to the God of
Heaven. They are the
ing for blood to defend on the
of our greatest Sovereign, for paying
them in their own effort and taking care
their face. What joy expanded over the
knowing, perhaps, some will say
Kind! God, who is the Lord of
in every thing, every thing
at every time, for every man and woman